

Kabuki and Manga

Bando Minosuke II, Kabuki actor

Nakano Hiroyuki, "*Weekly Shonen JUMP*" Editor-in-Chief

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1 Introduction

UMETADA:

Thank you all very much for coming to the talk event "Kabuki and Manga" today. My name is Umetada Misa, and I will be your host today.

This year, Ochanomizu University has launched the "Traditional Japanese Performing Arts for the Future" project. The aim of the project is to convey the appeal of traditional performing arts to the younger generation, and today we are proud to present our "Kabuki and Manga" talk event for that exact reason.

In recent years, kabuki has attracted a great deal of attention by staging kabuki plays based on manga, such as "*One Piece*" and "*NARUTO*", and these plays are generating a new fan base. With the aim of exploring the new era of kabuki performances and audience segments, we have invited two leading figures of these two distinct worlds to talk about the secrets of their performances and the affinity between their methods of expression.

Let me introduce our guest. Kabuki actor Mr. Bando Minosuke and the editor-in-chief of "*Weekly Shonen JUMP*", Mr. Nakano Hiroyuki. If you could give us a few words.

MINOSUKE:

Thank you all for coming today. As a kabuki actor myself, I look forward speaking about kabuki and manga, and hopefully even spark a little interest.

NAKANO:

Thank you for joining us today. My name is Nakano, and I am the Editor-in-Chief of "*Weekly Shonen JUMP*". How many of you have read "*JUMP*" before?

UMETADA:

(Seeing a lot of people raising their hands) That's a lot!

NAKANO:

I'm so happy (laughs). I know that Minosuke is the main focus of today's talk event, but from the standpoint of manga production, I'd like to humbly support him as much as I can. I'm looking forward to our discussion.

UMETADA:

Even though the event is limited to the campus, we've received a great response from both inside and outside the university since the announcement of the event, which really shows the high anticipation we all have not just for this topic, but to hear Minosuke and Nakano speak today. Please take it away.

2 Introduction of Works--Kabuki and Manga

UMETADA:

The two works were originally serialized manga on "*JUMP*". Could you tell us about the original manga?

NAKANO:

Yes. *"One Piece"* is one of the top sellers in Japan, so I'm sure you've heard of it. It is the work of Oda Eiichiro, and the series is about to enter its 24th year. The main character is a rubber-bodied boy named Monkey D. Luffy, who aims to become the pirate king. He and his friends, called the "Straw Hat Pirates", go on a great adventure in the age of pirates. It is an extremely popular series, with 97 volumes of comics published and 470 million copies sold worldwide.

UMETADA:

Next, please tell us about *"NARUTO"*.

NAKANO:

"NARUTO" is a 72-volume manga series by Kishimoto Masashi that was completed in 2014. It is a ninja action manga where the main character, Uzumaki Naruto, who aims to become the strongest ninja as the "Hokage", fights various enemies and grows by learning ninjutsu. Although it is a long manga, its main plot is Naruto's attempt to lead his rival Uchiha Sasuke, who betrayed his village, back to the right path. Currently, a sequel manga featuring Naruto's son, Boruto, is being serialized in *"V JUMP"*, and a TV anime is also being aired.

UMETADA:

Here are some examples of how kabuki was created based on these stories.

The first was Super Kabuki II *"One Piece"*, which premiered in 2015. The story covered "Impel Down" and "Paramount War", extracting approximately the 51st to 59th volumes of the long original work, which already had about 80 volumes at the time. Since its premiere, the show has been performed in many places, and the script and production have been gradually brushed up, with the cast varying slightly from show to show. The lead role is played by Ichikawa Ennosuke, and Minosuke has played the same three roles for a long time.

MINOSUKE:

The first one is Roronoa Zoro. Zoro is the second member of the "Straw Hat Pirates" led by Luffy, and is a three-sword swordsman. I have not seen many people who actually held a single sword, albeit a long bamboo sword, in their mouth. When I tried it, my jaw got pretty tired, so I thought Zoro fighting like this was really amazing (laughs). He is a very cool and masculine character.

Although he doesn't appear in Super Kabuki II *"One Piece"* that often, he is a character with many fans, so I did my best not to betray their expectations.

UMETADA:

The second role was the one you performed the most.

MINOSUKE:

That's right. It's Bon Clay. What can I say about him? It's very difficult to put into words, but if I were to use the words of the original story, I would say that he is an OKAMA. He is imprisoned in a prison called Impel Down, and with the help of Luffy, the

main character who comes to visit him, they try to escape from Impel Down together. Luffy and Bon Clay used to be enemies, but they eventually developed a passionate friendship and met again in Impel Down for the first time in a long time. Depicting their relationship was a challenging task, but a role worth playing.

UMETADA:

The third role is Squard.

MINOSUKE:

I think there are many people who know about "*One Piece*" but don't know about Squard. He is a treacherous man who backstabs the legendary pirate named Whitebeard from behind in a deceitful attack. However, even if the story leaves an impression on you, there aren't many people who remember much about Squard.

Make-up for Zoro and Bon Clay were made to look much like the original work, but for Squard, I used a makeup technique called "Kumadori" that is unique to kabuki. In the original story, the character is set to be about 50 years old, and I'm 31 now, and I was only 25 at the first performance, so upon consideration on how to express a character who is almost twice my age, I decided to use the "Kumadori" method which makes age hard to tell. It was a very memorable role with a lot of things to act out.

UMETADA:

It was a unique quality of kabuki for you to play three completely different roles.

UMETADA:

The first performance in 2018 was New Kabuki "*NARUTO*".

It was an amazing challenge to perform all 72 volumes of the original story, but it was beautifully composed, and I felt the fundamental power of kabuki. Unfortunately, this year's performance at the Misono-za Theater was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the last performance was back in 2019 at Minami-za Theater. Mr. Minosuke and Mr. Nakamura Hayato played as double lead roles, with Minosuke playing one of the main characters, Uzumaki Naruto, and his father, Namikaze Minato.

MINOSUKE:

Uzumaki Naruto is a really energetic boy who was 12 years old in the beginning, and the oldest he became was 15-16 years old.

NAKANO:

Yes, you're right.

MINOSUKE:

I was 29 years old when I performed as the character at the Minami-za Theater, but I didn't feel much discomfort because it is common in kabuki to transcend one's age. We were able to fit all 72 volumes into three and a half hours, and during that time I ran around the stage from stage left to stage right, from stage right to stage left and all the way to the "Hanamichi" (an elevated passageway which leads to the main stage).

UMETADA:

It must've been a struggle.

MINOSUKE:

I remember as a child being fascinated by Naruto's character, but never realized the amount of trouble he had gone through until I relived his experience through this performance.

UMETADA:

Another role you played was Namikaze Minato.

MINOSUKE:

Yes, he's Naruto's father, so I played the role of both father and son. Minato is a brave and legendary ninja, but he died at the same time Naruto was born.

When Naruto learned of his father's identity, he encounters his own father's consciousness concealed within him - leading to his growth through their interactions.

This was also an extremely rewarding experience for me, as I was able to play both the growth of a character and the catalyst who triggered the growth.

3 On Super Kabuki II "ONE PIECE" 1 -- Background of the performance

UMETADA:

I would like to ask you from both perspectives how the kabuki adaptation of the manga was carried out. First of all, how did the "*One Piece*" adaptation project come about?

NAKANO:

It didn't start out in any concrete way but was more so out of the blue. When a big shot from Shueisha and another big shot from the anime committee were having dinner, they said, "Wouldn't it be interesting if we turned '*One Piece*' into kabuki? " Then we decided to seriously think about it, so we talked to Shochiku, and it all came together very quickly.

UMETADA:

Normally for crossovers such as anime, I have the image that those creating the anime would come up with the idea, but did this idea come from within Shueisha?

NAKANO:

In fact, many of the anime adaptations of "*JUMP*" manga have been decided in this manner (laughs).

UMETADA:

I'm surprised (also laughs).

NAKANO:

A little chat with only a vague image of how "cool it'd be" lead to a more concrete discussion.

UMETADA:

Someone in your company knows a lot about kabuki, and they hit it off from there. I think it was because they had a subconscious awareness that "*One Piece*" had

kabuki-like elements?

NAKANO:

I'm sure there was. I think those people already had the image that it would be interesting to make it into kabuki.

UMETADA:

So it was that happy banter that made it happen. (laughs)

NAKANO:

Yes, that's right. (also laughs)

UMETADA:

How did you first hear about "*One Piece*" becoming a kabuki play, and how did you feel about it?

MINOSUKE:

Like everyone else in the world, I learned about it by reading the main issue of "*JUMP*". I still have a subscription to "*JUMP*" and I remember seeing the "big news" article in the paper.

UMETADA:

Did you know that you would be performing then?

MINOSUKE:

Not at all.

UMETADA:

Did you want to perform in this play?

MINOSUKE:

I didn't think of that either. That's because, on a private note, it was to be performed as Super Kabuki II. Super Kabuki is a new genre of kabuki created by Ichikawa En-o when he was still known as Ennosuke, and it incorporates staging and story themes that were never seen in traditional classical kabuki.

Myself, my father Mitsugoro X, and my grandfather Mitsugoro IX had no connection to Super Kabuki at all. Moreover, I come from a family that did not have many opportunities to work with En-o or Ennosuke. For that reason, I never thought that I would be in the show or that I wanted to be in it, but I remember accepting the idea of performing "*One Piece*" as Super Kabuki II without much surprise, and thinking to myself, "Oh, I see, I bet this can happen".

UMETADA:

When the decision was made for you to perform, did they tell you your role as well?

MINOSUKE:

No, it took a long time to get to know the role after it was decided. I was given the role before I even knew what part of the original story I would be performing.

The person from Shochiku said, "First, your role is Zoro." Zoro, got it. "One more role, Bon Clay." Bon Clay? Zoro and Bon Clay? Was it going to be the "Arabasta"?

NAKANO:

The first series in which Bon Clay appears as an enemy of Luffy.

MINOSUKE:

I thought I was going to play that part, but then I was told, "One more role, do you know Squard?" So I said, "Yes, I know him".

So, I finally understood that I would be doing the "Paramount War". It was like I had to figure out the role first, and then figure out which scene I was going to play.

UMETADA:

That is an advanced feat that you can do because you know the manga in detail. How did the editorial team perceive the kabuki adaptation?

NAKANO:

They were still surprised at first. We talked about how interesting it would be if we could do it, but I think the big question was, could we really do it? However, I felt proud that "*One Piece*" was chosen as the first manga to adapt for the wonderful traditional art form of kabuki.

UMETADA:

Up until now, "*One Piece*" has been made into an anime, and there have been human performances in theme parks, but this is the first time it's been made onto a stage.

NAKANO:

You are right.

4 On Super Kabuki II "ONE PIECE" 2 -- Aspects of Kabuki-ization

UMETADA:

I would like to ask you specifically about the process of creating kabuki. Minosuke, you were involved in various aspects of the production, but how did you incorporate the manga into the kabuki?

MINOSUKE:

I am very proud to say that I was involved in the production. The first rehearsal started with very few people in the troupe who had read the original story, including Mr. Ennosuke who was also involved as a director. I'm a fan of the original story, so I was concerned about some things from that point of view, and I said a lot of things. However, these were only my opinions as a manga fan, and Mr. Ennosuke took the lead in incorporating them into the Super Kabuki II production.

I myself am just an annoying fan (laughs). I just kept telling Mr. Ennosuke, "I don't want to see anything like this," or "This person would never say something like this." In the end, I'm glad that the fans who liked the original story and Oda-sensei were pleased with the result, but what I did was not that big of a deal, I was just there as a nitpicky fan.

NAKANO:

I think Minosuke, you understood the important points from the point of view of a fan of the original work, and you protected it well.

MINOSUKE:

In the "Paramount War" chapter, a legendary pirate named Whitebeard dies in battle. He dies standing up upright without a single scratch on his back, and the narration says, "Neither that mighty body nor his pirate's pride suffered even one "coward's wound" . It's one of the coolest scenes I've ever seen in a man's death.

For this scene, I had to leave the rehearsal room for some business, and when I came back and watched the rehearsal, I saw that Whitebeard had been slashed on his back. I told them, "I'm sorry, but please don't give him a scar on his back."

NAKANO:

I am very grateful for what you have done.

MINOSUKE:

That's what I've been doing. However, the difficulty is that the initial approach was based on kabuki theories.

So in kabuki tradition, a powerful character is usually wounded by surprise, and is often slashed from behind. However, in the case of Whitebeard, I wanted him to never have a wound on his back, so we re-designed our approach.

UMETADA:

I'm sure there are many more interesting episodes like this.

UMETADA:

In what way was Oda-sensei involved?

NAKANO:

Oda-sensei was originally a fan of period dramas and kabuki, so he was involved in the script writing stage and even went to watch a day of rehearsals. However, I think he had a better understanding of kabuki than the editorial staff, as he said, "I want people to be free to do what they want, otherwise it won't be interesting."

MINOSUKE:

Oda-sensei was at the rehearsal hall on the first day. He was wearing a pair of Doflamigo sunglasses. He gave the exact same sunglasses to Mr. Ennosuke.

I vividly remember the two of them in the director's chair wearing the exact same sunglasses as a gift to Mr. Ennosuke (laughs).

On that day, we were in the "book reading" stage, reading the script. For example, "Gomu Gomu no Gatling Gun(銃乱打)" was ill-written as "Gomu Gomu no Shooting Spree".

NAKANO:

In the original work, kanji characters are printed with kana.

MINOSUKE:

It's called "Gomu Gomu no Ju(銃)", or "Gomu Gomu no Pistol". Pirate Empress Hancock, played by Mr. Ennosuke, has a technique called "Mero Mero Mellow(甘風)" that melts the opponent into stone. In the original work, "amakaze(甘風)" is written with the Chinese character for "mellow," but there is no kana in the script, so the understudy, who did

not know the original work, read it as "mero mero amakaze(甘風)". Oda-sensei liked it very much, and said, "Let's go with this for kabuki! He said, "Let's do kabuki this way!

UMETADA:

Interesting episode. (laughs)

MINOSUKE:

From that point on, it was agreed that all special skills should be read in kanji. I had the impression that he was a very interesting and open-minded creator(writer). It was a pity that there was no change in the characters for the roles I played, such as Zoro's "Oni giri(鬼斬り)", which was originally written in kanji.

NAKANO:

In manga, you see the meaning of the kanji and the kana together, or that's how the technique is seen. I think that Oda-sensei put more emphasis on the meaning of the kanji, and thought that kabuki would be more interesting that way.

UMETADA:

How did you feel about cutting out a part of the story from a long manga that will soon be published in 100 volumes?

NAKANO:

I thought it would be a good fit to do "Impel Down" and "Paramount War" in kabuki, and that it would be interesting.

It's also a series that focuses on the protagonist, so to speak, as Luffy is separated from the "Straw Hat Pirates" and plays an active role on his own.

UMETADA:

At that time, as soon as the first day of the show opened, I heard about the reputation of the show. Tickets were sold out immediately, and there were rumors of Minosuke's Bon Clay being particularly amazing.

MINOSUKE:

Thank you very much (laughs).

UMETADA:

What was the editorial team's impression of the stage? How did you feel about it?

NAKANO:

To be honest, the editorial department was anxious until the curtain opened. As a protector of the original work, we always check the script and add deficits from the viewpoint that the characters in the original work would not say such things. We have worked on many anime and 2.5 D stage productions that are based on the original story, but this was the first time for us to work on kabuki. It felt like a cross-cultural clash between manga and kabuki. The agency in between, ADK, seemed to have a tough time. A editor of "*JUMP*" really put a lot of red ink in the script.

But the kabuki side said, "This is the way it is in kabuki theory, so please understand". Later, Yokouchi Kensuke(script and directed) said, "I thought the JUMP editorial department was GHQ" (laughs).

Because of this background, the editorial department had no idea what to expect, or whether this would be really interesting, but we were astonished by how amazing it was. First of all, I thought to myself, "*JUMP*" manga is kabuki! And even the scene with Whitebeard, which I mentioned earlier, could be so gripping without some of the details before and after, and it really did reach the audience. Even to those who didn't know much about "*One Piece*" were moved to tears. I was moved by the realization that the story created by Oda-sensei was a universal one. I really thought that kabuki and "*ONE PIECE*" were a perfect match.

UMETADA:

Mr. Minosuke, did you feel a different response to your performance from the usual kabuki?

MINOSUKE:

After all, the audience was completely different. There was a heat I had never felt before. I had never felt such enthusiasm.

There were many people who became my fans after this performance too, and started coming to see kabuki.

However, I do have some regrets. As a new attempt by Mr. Ennosuke, at the end of the second act, there was what is commonly called "Fah Fah Time". It was called "Fah Fah Time" because the lyrics were "Fah Fah , Fah Fah " when Mr. Ennosuke's Luffy pulled back in midair while playing the theme song "*TETOTE*" written by Yuzu. The audience got excited as if they were at a live concert, and "Super Tambourine" goods were sold at the theater for this purpose.

NAKANO:

It was just in the editorial office, so I brought it. (Plays the Super Tambourine)

UMETADA:

Thank you for bringing that (laughs).

MINOSUKE:

Makes me nostalgic (also laughs). The audience waved these with us. It is unthinkable in today's Corona pandemic, but the actors descended so far that they filled the aisles of the audience seats, and the whole theater was excited to see Luffy ride off in midair. It was the famous "Fah Fah Time" of Super Kabuki II "*One Piece*", but I never participated in it.

UMETADA:

Was it a role you hadn't played?

MINOSUKE:

Yes. Bon Clay did "Honmizu no Tachimawari(Standing (=action) in real water)" just before, and after the curtain closed, there was an "off-curtain retraction" where he pulled down the Hanamichi by himself. Immediately after that was "Fah Fah Time", and as soon as the third act came after the intermission, I would perform as Squard, so we were busy preparing for that. The audience often commented, "Fah Fah Time" is so

much fun! but I could only say, "Must've been great!" That's what I regret very much. What are we even talking about? (laughs)

UMETADA:

(also laughs) It was an unprecedented level of excitement, and I'm sure that's where you realized that you were gaining new kabuki fans, and fans of Minosuke-san.

5 On New Kabuki "NARUTO"1 -- Background of the Performance

UMETADA:

Then there's the kabuki adaptation of "NARUTO". How did this happen?

NAKANO:

After the success of "*One Piece*", both Shochiku company and Shueisha publishing naturally thought that "NARUTO" was the next step, and the editorial department was contacted. At the time, I also went to Shochiku for a meeting, and they told me that they wanted to work with Minosuke and Hayato, the young people who would be leading the next generation, which was perfect for NARUTO, so I said, "Please do it". I remember how smoothly we started talking about "NARUTO" as our next project.

UMETADA:

Minosuke, how did you feel when you were asked to play the lead role in "NARUTO"?

MINOSUKE:

It was just one year before the performance that Shochiku told me about it, and that's when I first heard about the kabuki adaptation. All I knew was that it would be me and Hayato playing Naruto and Sasuke. My first impression was that it was a very last-minute decision.

When I received the offer, I was thrilled by the idea of being in a position of responsibility. There was only one year before the performance, and I was in my twenties at the time, and Hayato was even younger than me.

The success of "*One Piece*" was fresh in the minds of the public, not to mention Shochiku, so I thought this was a project that arose from that. However, the success of "*One Piece*" was due to the presence of Ennosuke, the ground workings of Super Kabuki created by En-o, and the actors around me, including myself, who were also very well trained. In that respect, if the lead roles were mine and Hayato's, it would be difficult to perform in an environment and with a full cast. So, I thought it would be a difficult performance. Also, I was worried especially because I knew the original story.

UMETADA:

I have the impression that kabuki is produced more speedily than other forms of theater, but in the case of new works, is it too late to be approached a year in advance?

MINOSUKE:

The reason why kabuki usually requires so few rehearsal days is because it is a classic. Even though there are only three or four days of rehearsal, it does not mean that that is

the only time they rehearse; they have been rehearsing for some time before that, and it takes three or four days to put them together. The reason why this is possible is that older works have been performed for hundreds of years and have been refined. If you think about it that way, one year is not really enough time. Since "*NARUTO*" is a large scale show, I thought it was too urgent.

At that point, the script was not ready, and we had not decided who would appear in the performance. Then, I didn't even know which actors to call. I also thought that it would be difficult to gather people.

UMETADA:

Are you saying that you never felt the joy and excitement of playing the main character of a work that you have loved since you were a child?

MINOSUKE:

Not at all. (laughs)

UMETADA:

Have you felt that in the run up to the concluding program?

MINOSUKE:

I didn't have It's not limited to "*NARUTO*", but I guess that's just my personality. It's the same with "*One Piece*".

I cherish the original work and try to please the fans of the original, but then I can't be a fan. I think the feeling of "I'm happy to be doing Naruto" doesn't happen unless you are a fan.

Even when the props artist prepared Zoro's sword and Naruto's forehead patch, I wasn't so excited that I could wear them. I didn't get too excited. I was more interested in how to make them look more like Zoro and Naruto. Of course, that's not to say that I wasn't happy, but I didn't feel the excitement of being in a manga that I loved.

6 On New Kabuki "*NARUTO*" 2-- Aspects of Kabuki-ization

UMETADA:

"*NARUTO*" was a 72-volume kabuki adaptation. In the case of "*One Piece*", a part of a long story is shown which is more common in modern kabuki. In this respect, was it difficult to do the whole story? Wasn't it?

MINOSUKE:

Of course, it is very difficult. It's not that "*One Piece*" didn't have it, but when you have 72 volumes to show in 3.5 hours, it's hard to find the right moment.

Kishimoto-sensei don't draw manga on the assumption that it will be cut. It was very hard for me to choose where to cut from among the episodes.

Even though there were scenes that I wanted to see, or that I thought would be interesting on stage, I couldn't bring them out because of the back and forth and time constraints. In the end, the script focused on the two characters, Naruto and Sasuke, but there were many characters who didn't appear because of that. I loved reading his

work, so it was a painful experience for me.

UMETADA:

How did you decide to make the whole story into a kabuki?

NAKANO:

I was the deputy editor of "*NARUTO*" when it was first published, and although I wasn't as involved as the editor, I was still in a position to support it, so I know how it works. The "*NARUTO*" manga is divided into two parts, the shonen(boy) version and the seinen(youth) version, and the first part is up to volume 27. The first draft of the script was actually the first part of the original story. Even then, there were so many elements that I couldn't see the theme. I couldn't get it right.

So I told the project lead, "Shouldn't we limit our focus on Naruto and Sasuke?" And he said, "That's right, I agree with you". Later, I asked him, "So, what happened to the script? " He said, "We're going to do every volume, all 72 of them." I remember thinking how exactly the opposite of what I suggested happened. (laughs)

MINOSUKE:

(also laughs)

NAKANO:

In the first draft of the script, I couldn't see the "essence of the story"; G2-san(script and directed) and Kishimoto-sensei thought it would be better to do the whole volume to portray the story of "*NARUTO*". It must have been a difficult task for G2-san to decide where to cut and where to leave. However, the polished final script was a very good one, condensing the story of "*NARUTO*" into three and a half hours.

UMETADA:

Is the decision to cut out "*One Piece*" but not "*NARUTO*" based on the structure of the original work?

NAKANO:

I think it's important that "*NARUTO*" was completed at that time.

UMETADA:

And "*One Piece*" still has a long way to go.

NAKANO:

That's right. There is still a lot of room left for the story to go on and grow, so I don't think it's possible to depict everything about Luffy right now. From that point of view, I think the decision was made to cut some parts.

UMETADA:

How was Kishimoto-sensei involved in this project?

NAKANO:

Kishimoto-sensei is also the kind of comic artist who leaves things to him charge and committee, so I don't think he had any detailed orders, but I heard that he gave us a lot of input about the script at the beginning.

UMETADA:

Minosuke, you played the lead role in the play. How was your relationship with the play?

MINOSUKE:

Since I was playing the lead role, and since I had been close to G2-san personally for a long time, he consulted me on various matters, and we talked about the script, such as whether we should keep a part or not. I was also involved in various other practical issues, such as budget and casting. Compared to *"One Piece"*, I think my involvement in the production was much greater.

UMETADA:

Were there any differences from other New Kabuki productions in terms of being based on manga?

MINOSUKE:

I tried not to think about the fact that it had to be kabuki, especially when it came to *"NARUTO"*. I didn't want to lose anything that was critical to the story.

Even in the visuals, I didn't decide to stop because it didn't look like kabuki. For example, if I were to create a New Kabuki work from scratch, I would be able to talk with the scriptwriter, and I would be able to make various changes in the production process.

But the manga is already done, especially *"NARUTO"*, and it's finished. I wanted to make sure that I would not be disrespectful to the fans who love my work.

I wanted to make sure that I respect the original work. Of course, it's the same for the author of the original work, but for us actors as well, what we express becomes the property of the recipient once it leaves our hands. Therefore, I wanted to respect the feelings of the fans.

Of course, I may not have been able to clear everything, but I think it is only a work with such a popular original story that I was able to come up with the idea of creating a work that respects the feelings of the people who love it.

UMETADA:

What was the feedback from within the company and the editorial team after seeing the stage?

NAKANO:

After all, *"NARUTO"* was a perfect kabuki fit, and it was very well received within Shueisha. I cry every time I see it, partly because I was involved, partly because I can understand why they did all 72 volumes, and I knew it was the right way to turn the manga into kabuki. As the person in charge of this project, I've always loved the *"NARUTO"* manga, and now I understand why.

As the director of the series, I have poured my passion into creating *"NARUTO"*, and now I know why, and I have learned the charm of the work again and love it even more.

UMETADA:

In *"One Piece"*, the focus was on the unique character of Luffy, and in a sense, it was interesting to focus on a single character, but in *"NARUTO"*, by showing the entire

volume, I'm guessing the drama of the original work was revealed in a more concrete way?

NAKANO:

Unlike anime and 2.5D stage productions that focus on showing the surface of the story, the actors and G2-san showed us the story of Naruto and Sasuke.

I felt that we were able to grasp the "essence of the story" that fans and editors had been vaguely aware of until then.

UMETADA:

Even in kabuki, there are stories that cannot be conveyed unless they are performed in full - for example, Tsuruya Nanboku - all while a single scene in a work by Kawatake Mokuami can be somehow convincing. This kind of structural difference exists in shonen manga as well, and it was very interesting to see how it came to light in the kabuki adaptation.

7 The Affinity of Kabuki and Manga 1--Methods of Expression

UMETADA:

Both works were very well received, and I think that the affinity between kabuki and manga emerged from that. In the meantime, have you ever felt while performing that the visual expression methods of kabuki fits well with manga?

MINOSUKE:

After all, one of the unique expressions of kabuki is "Mie"(a striking pose). The sound of "Tsuke-uchi" (bang-bang) is heard, and the actors make a big show of themselves. This action is quite cartoonish, or at least very close to it.

Nowadays, kabuki is being shown in movie theaters under the name of "Cinema Kabuki". Some customers seem to be happy because they can't see kabuki in their everyday lives, but I don't want them to get a close-up of my face during the performance. A "Mie" is not a "set face," but a "set pose". It is a pose that includes the expression of the body, the entire body down to the toes. I always ask the video editors, "Please don't put my face up just because I'm doing 'Mie' ".

For example, in the manga "*One Piece*", for example, the scene where Zoro does his "Onigiri" is said to be one where his face is barely visible. In many cases, his face is barely shown. But it's cool, isn't it? In "*NARUTO*", there are various techniques, such as Naruto's "Rasengan" and Sasuke's "Chidori", and when they are unleashed, they are always depicted in large frames on paper. The fact that only his face is in close-up when he unleashes that special move is an expression that you don't see very often.

NAKANO:

Luffy also has a famous scene where he says, "I am going to become the King of the Pirates! " which always shows his whole pose including his hand.

MINOSUKE:

That's right. In this respect, I think there are similarities between kabuki performance

and manga expression. In kabuki, there is often a tendency to do things that are not true.

If you do this in a space where you are doing a realistic play, such as in other theater, a so-called straight play or a 2.5-D stage, and suddenly you do something like "Mie" only when you are about to perform a special move, that would be counter-intuitive. In the genre of kabuki, kabuki actors are doing kabuki, so they can do "Mie". It is only in kabuki that you can strike a cool pose and perform a comical gesture without a sense of embarrassment. I think that's a big similarity with manga.

UMETADA:

From the perspective of manga, have you ever found it to be any similar to Kabuki expression?

NAKANO:

I thought the "Mie" movement was exactly similar to the motions seen in a *"JUMP"* manga. Of course, it can be said that all manga have similar scenes. However, *"JUMP"* is a magazine that has specialized in making its characters look particularly cool. Characters always have great scenes, like Luffy saying, "I am going to become the King of the Pirates! ", for Naruto, "Give up trying to make me give up!!" and so on. It's as if it's a spectacle scene, and by deciding to do so, they've drawn us into wondering what will happen next week. I thought, *"JUMP"* has gained popularity through the use of "Mie".

For example, realistically when someone meets an enemy, it's natural to slash each other without saying much, but instead our characters exclaim, "Guffaw, I'm Captain somebody, I'm here to destroy you!" or, "Let's settle this once and for all, insert awesome quote here! " It's a unnatural, but I think it's also very kabuki-like.

UMETADA:

While there are many other manga genres, and even in the same shonen manga genre, there are many other magazines, *"JUMP"* in particular has been created with "character" in mind.

NAKANO:

Yes, for sure. Each manga artist and editor have their own preferences, but in the end, the characters are important, and I think that's what every *"JUMP"* comic has in common.

UMETADA:

Speaking of characters, in kabuki, as soon as an actor appears on stage, you can visually tell what kind of person he is, his character, his status, and the situation he is in. Do you feel that such expressions have anything in common with manga when it comes to acting?

MINOSUKE:

As a kabuki actor, my perception is that there is a great deal of this, but also a lot of

subtle differences. As a kabuki actor, I recognize that there is a lot of that, and a lot of subtle differences.

For example, Zoro's green hair does not mean anything in terms of his personality. But I do think that his short hair is meaningful. As an example of a difference in interpretation, when the wig maker first made Zoro's wig for the first performance of "*One Piece*", the wig was very long, and stood upwards like a green "Super Saiyans" wig.

It seems that there is an old feeling that strong characters have stand on end hair. In the kabuki play "*Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*"(*Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*), Sato Tadanobu plays the role of the re-incarnation of a fox. The wig is called "Hishikawa", which means that all the hair is standing stand on end. This was chosen to fit the character of Zoro, so he became a green Super Saiyan, but I thought that the fact that it was standing stand on end meant that Zoro would have set his hair in the world of "*One Piece*". I couldn't get the image of Zoro setting his hair every morning. I didn't like that, so I asked him to keep his hair short and close to the original. The flyer for the Cinema Kabuki "*One Piece*" uses the same still photos that were taken before the production.

The wig maker was thoughtful enough to bring me a wig taken from Sato Tadanobu, but it doesn't fit into the world of the "*One Piece*" manga. In that sense, not everything is connected. The exaggerated expressions in kabuki and the less exaggerated expressions in manga are not connected, for example. The green hair and the stand on end hair are both visual features, but if you put them together, they instantly become less Zoro. There were a few key points like that.

8 The Affinity of Kabuki and Manga 2-Story

UMETADA:

In the Edo period, the method of creating kabuki plays was not so much to come up with a story and characters from scratch, but to use well-known stories, literary works, and earlier works of entertainment as a base, and then rewrite them little by little.

In this respect, for example, the three-way deadlock of Jiraiya, Orochimaru, and Tsunade in "*NARUTO*" is a kabuki subject, and so is the nine-tailed fox. As you can see, the subject matter and techniques of "*NARUTO*" have a lot in common with kabuki. Was Kishimoto-sensei aware of this?

NAKANO:

I don't know to what extent he was aware of kabuki, but he originally loved that kind of Japanese culture, and he studied design and story structure very much. Like Oda-sensei, manga artists are quite studious, and they study many books and movies from all over the world for their creations. Kishimoto-sensei is a particularly diligent person, so I feel that he studied kabuki and used it as his own material.

UMETADA:

For example, "*Suikoden*" and "*Nanso Satomi Hakkenden*" have been performed in Super Kabuki and 21st Century Kabuki-gumi. Bakin wrote "*Hakkenden*" under the influence of the Chinese novel "*Suikoden*", and Toriyama Akira created "*Dragon Ball*" using the same style, and then "*One Piece*" was born under its influence. In a sense, they are connected as a water vein, so to speak.

In this respect, I felt that it was inevitable that kabuki would choose "*One Piece*" and "*NARUTO*" as their material. In your performance, did you feel any kabuki elements in the story of "*One Piece*" and "*NARUTO*"?

MINOSUKE:

That's hard to say, to be honest. Kabuki is a lot of things. It's the same with manga, which is also many things. So we can't say, "These narrative characteristics are kabuki." We've been doing kabuki since we were born. We've seen, performed, and been exposed to many different kinds of kabuki.

For example, if I wanted to say, "This part of this work and this part of '*One Piece*' are similar," I could, but if I were to say that it was a representative work of kabuki, I would think, "Not really". But if you ask me if it is a representative work of kabuki, I think, "Not really". On the other hand, if you took a manga that was completely different from "*One Piece*" and asked me to name one kabuki performance that was similar to the story of that manga, I'm sure I could come up with something. That's how many different things have been expressed in kabuki, I think.

If we're talking about connecting, does that mean that we're good at exaggerating aesthetic sensations and visual expressions? In other words, not only in kabuki and manga, but also in the Japanese race and the culture of this country, there is something like that.

UMETADA:

It really is. In kabuki, anything is possible.

NAKANO:

Indeed, I was wondering what the next kabuki adaptation would be, and from the past, I thought it would be a shonen manga or an easy-to-understand battle manga, but it turned out to be "*Nausica of the Valley of the Wind*" (laughs).

UMETADA:

It certainly did (also laughs). I was surprised by that.

NAKANO:

"*Nausica*" was going to become kabuki? When you think about it, if you say that everything is kabuki-like, you may indeed be right.

UMETADA:

It was a great pleasure to see how kabuki and its way of adaptation, which never stops evolving at any moment, came to light through the encounter with manga.

9 The Significance of the Theatricalization of Manga

UMETADA:

I have a strong image that the trigger for the explosive sales of manga is the anime adaptation. On the other hand, theater, which has a limited number of viewers, does not seem to have such an impact on circulation. Still, in recent years, original manga works have become popular in Kabuki and Takarazuka, not to mention the 2.5D stage. Where do publishers find the significance of adapting manga for the theater?

NAKANO:

Of course, there is the business aspect of the company, but from the editorial side, which is especially close to the work and the manga artist, the brand enhancement of the work is a big factor. But the most important thing is that when a great stage is created, both the manga artist and the editor are happy. It increases the motivation of the manga artist, makes him/her realize something new about the work, and gives him/her the strength to work on the next work.

It means a lot to me that fans can see something as marvelous as *"One Piece"* or *"NARUTO"* in kabuki. As I mentioned earlier, they will discover a new appeal of the work. Then, they will come back to the original work and the anime. I think that making something good is a cycle, and it always comes back to something good.

UMETADA:

Did the kabuki adaptation have any impact on the manga in any way?

NAKANO:

I think there was. However, since *"NARUTO"* is no longer serialized, I would like to see it drawn again in that regard. For example, when Naruto and Sasuke have their last conversation in the valley called "Valley of the End", there is real water flowing on the stage, and Minosuke and Hayato fight endlessly while getting wet. Kishimoto-sensei was very moved by this.

Of course, the two of you are really fighting, so you are getting more and more tired. This is the kind of acting that voice actors who only do voices in anime can't do. It was interesting to see how they fought under such extreme conditions and how tired they were! If Kishimoto-sensei were to draw the "Valley of the End" one more time, I think the scene would be a little different.

1 0 Questions and Answers 1

UMETADA:

Are there any questions from Minosuke-san to Nakano-san or from Nakano-san to Minosuke-san?

MINOSUKE:

My questions would only become manga fan-boy questions (laughs).

NAKANO:

(Also laughs) The real water scene shocked me every time I saw it, but how hard is it on

the body? Also, how do you clean up after pouring water on a large stage?

MINOSUKE:

I don't really feel much burden. I'm sure it's a burden, but in both "*One Piece*" and "*NARUTO*", a lot of work has been done before the final battle scene. I think the water temperature and water pressure would be astonishing if you were to experience it suddenly with nothing in the water, but as a person working on it, I hardly feel it because of my heart pumping. To be honest, I don't know how much of a burden it is because it's only 15 minutes out of a 3.5 hour performance.

"Honmizu" is a performance that has been around since the Edo period. Nowadays, we can lay down tarpaulins on the stage, and the props do their best to clean up after themselves, but I wonder how they did it in back in the old days. If you pour water on a wooden board, it will soon rot if it is not dried properly.

UMETADA:

Here are some questions from the audience. "What kind of reaction did you get from within the kabuki world about the '*One Piece*' performance? "

MINOSUKE:

Actually, the response was not as great as it was compared to our audience. Of course, there were people who came to see the show and said it was interesting. Especially Nakamura Kankuro and Nakamura Shichinosuke, who love "*JUMP*", so they had high expectations for us (laughs). They also added the narration at the beginning of the stage, "Gold Roger, The 'The king of the pirat's' , had achieved it all. The final word he spoke....." Incidentally, I was the one who suggested that we put in that narration. Kankuro-san and Shichinosuke-san agreed to do it.

UMETADA:

I see! It was a very good performance that drew me into the world of "*One Piece*" instantly.

MINOSUKE:

There were people who came to see the show and were delighted, and there were also people who said, "Hmm, not bad I guess". When "*One Piece*" was being performed at the Shinbashi Enbujo theater, there were also kabuki performances at other theaters, and the performers there were putting their souls into their performances. Naturally, your own stage is the most important, so in that sense, I can honestly say that the response was not as strong as it was in the public.

UMETADA:

This is a question for Minosuke. "What are some of the kabuki aspects of your work that you absolutely cannot leave out? "

MINOSUKE:

There are many ways to do this, but I think the most important one is the presence of "Onnagata", where a man plays a woman's character. This is a unique feature of kabuki

that is hard to find on any other stage. For example, Hancock in *"One Piece"* is an incredibly beautiful woman, and Tsunade in *"NARUTO"* is a very glamorous woman. Even these roles are played by men. I think that "Onnagata" is an essential part of kabuki.

1 1 Questions and Answers 2--On the Media Mix

UMETADA:

Many questions have been asked about the differences from other genres. First of all, we asked, "In what ways are you different from a 2.5D performance?"

NAKANO:

It's similar to what I mentioned earlier about the "essence". 2.5D stage and event showtimes first focus on resembling the manga, or making the same thing as in the manga more three-dimensional. For example, in the case of costumes, how to make the same design more three-dimensional, or in the case of hairstyles, how to make the exact same hairstyle more realistic.

On the other hand, in the case of kabuki, when I first started working on *"One Piece"*, I wondered whether it was right to stick to the manga. With *"One Piece"*, I was more or less convinced, so for *"NARUTO"*, I thought that it would be better if it was recognizable as Naruto even if it didn't look like the manga. The costumes are not exactly the same, but you can still tell that they are Naruto and Sasuke, and the materials are such that they would look right at home in real life. I think this is one of the most important points.

UMETADA:

And that's exactly what Minosuke-san is wearing today. (Wearing orange and black sportswear.)

MINOSUKE:

I bought this to wear to rehearsals for the Misono-za Theater performance, thinking it would look like Naruto. It was cancelled due to the Corona virus, so I didn't have a chance to show it off, so I wore it today.

UMETADA:

When Mr. Minosuke wears it, it is immediately recognizable as Naruto. It is the strength of popular manga that the characters come to life simply by using colors, and I think that the kabuki style has been beautifully reconstructed while taking advantage of this characteristic.

MINOSUKE:

I think so, too.

UMETADA:

The next question is also related. "What is the difference between a kabuki adaptation and a live-action film adaptation?" What do you think of the many movies that have

been made about the *"JUMP"* manga in recent years?

NAKANO:

Live action is similar to a 2.5D stage. I think the big thing is whether or not the manga can be made three-dimensional as it is. Since *"JUMP"* has a lot of fantastical works, it has been said that it is not suitable for live-action, so it has not been actively pursued. The most important reason for the increase in film adaptations in recent years is the development of CG and other technologies. Live-action films, which are required to faithfully represent manga in three dimensions, are also supported by these technologies.

UMETADA:

Shueisha's *"Kingdom"* movie was incredibly powerful, and I felt the power of CG.

NAKANO:

You are right.

UMETADA:

Speaking of your relationship with Shueisha, you are playing the role of Uta in the live-action film *"Tokyo Ghoul"*. How did you prepare for this role?

MINOSUKE:

At that time, I worked on *"One Piece"*, Uta-san, and *"NARUTO"*. It was a time when I worked more with Shueisha than with Shochiku. For Uta, the difference from kabuki was that, as Mr. Nakano said, we were very particular about the visual reproduction. Uta has tattoos all over his body, so it took a lot of time to recreate that.

UMETADA:

Do you actually paint them?

MINOSUKE:

It is a combination of paint and stickers. It still took a specialist about three and a half hours to put them on my whole body. Piercings are also very difficult. Special make-up putty is used to make more earlobes, and then holes are made in them.

UMETADA:

There are many roles with tattoos in kabuki, but if you wear an *"Irezumi Kiniku"* with the pattern on it, you can complete the role right away. In the first place, I often play several roles in a day.

MINOSUKE:

Yes. Also, Uta's KAKUGAN which eyes are always black in the whites and red in the blacks. This is normal during filming and camera checks, but when you see the finished product, you will see that his eyes have been treated with CG. The finished product can only be seen in the video, but the actor is very particular about recreating such a look, so of course as an actor, I must live up to that.

However, I'm a kabuki actor, so it's easier for me to be involved in the field of kabuki like in *"One Piece"* and *"NARUTO"*.

UMETADA:

In the case of kabuki, the script was heavily reworked by the editorial staff, while the direction, or rather the expression, was almost completely free, as I could see by comparing it to other genres. "*One Piece*" and "*NARUTO*" are going to be made into live-action movies by Hollywood, what do you think about that? It's a world I can't even imagine.

NAKANO:

In Hollywood, it's even more of a clash of different cultures. It's hard for them to understand the essence of the original work. So, I had to start from the very beginning. First of all, it takes a year or two to make a contract. After that, it takes another two to three years to write the script, and 5 years for the script to be completely polished.

UMETADA:

It's a stark contrast to the speed of kabuki-ization.

NAKANO:

As I said, live-action films, whether in Japan or Hollywood, cannot be made to look too fake. It's difficult to describe, but I think it's better to say that there are two lies in For example, the visual of Luffy in Super Kabuki II is whitewashed and not that close to the manga. But when Mr. Ennosuke is doing it, he looks more and more like Luffy. Ace, on the other hand, had a visual that was very close to the manga. The way these two are saying "Oh, Luffy!" and "It's Ace!" is a picture of a completely different worldview, but it doesn't bother me at all. It becomes "I'm glad they were reunited" and "I'm sad Ace is dead" I think it is kabuki that allows this kind of lie, while live-action films do not.

UMETADA:

From there, it leads to criticism of live-action.

NAKANO:

You'll feel weird. You'll probably think that there's something wrong with it.

1 2 Questions and Answers 3--Conclusion:

MINOSUKE:

Personally, I have a question I would like to answer. It's from a kabuki beginner, "Is there anything I should do to prepare myself before seeing a kabuki? "

UMETADA:

It says she bought a ticket just a few minutes ago.

NAKANO:

Wow, nice! (laughs)

MINOSUKE:

I'm glad to hear that (also laughs). I thought it would be a good idea to do a little research about the performance you are going to see. The words may be difficult, and the expressions may be unique, but they are all in Japanese, so if you can get a rough idea of the plot and who the characters are, you will be able to understand what they

are saying and doing. That's about all you need to know, so please do a little prep work. For example, if a friend invites you to a live concert of an artist you don't know much about, don't you listen to at least one album before you go? If you think of it as the same thing, I think you will feel more at ease.

I hope that if you watch it, you will be able to understand it a little better, and from there you will be able to find something you like about it, such as "this part is interesting", "this person is wonderful", or "this costume is beautiful", and enjoy it.

UMETADA:

Mr. Nakano has received many questions as well.

NAKANO:

Many people ask me, "What's the next kabuki production you're going to make? "Of course, I would be delighted if we could do this again, and I would like to work on it actively. However, what you said today made me realize once again that anything is possible in kabuki. Normally, I would think, "Next, there will be a manga like this.....", but if "*Nausica of the Valley of the Wind*" was created, I would think, "Oh, that's going to become kabuki? Can you do that? " I would like to do a work like that. But I also wonder if it would be too much work(laughs) .I'd like to try my hand at something like that.

MINOSUKE:

Please let me perform again!(also laughs)

UMETADA:

I'm looking forward to seeing what kind of work I can see.

UMETADA:

Please give us a few words to wrap it up.

MINOSUKE:

This is the first time I have spoken about these two works in this way, but I hope you enjoyed it. I'm sure that one day there will be a new collaboration between manga and kabuki that will follow these two works, or a major entertainment work, and I hope that you will experience the power of live performance at the theater. I myself would love to be involved in another "*JUMP*" production. Thank you, Mr. Nakano, for your continued support.

NAKANO:

Like everyone else in the audience, I was blissfully happy to see Mr. Minosuke in person and hear his many stories. I believe that "*JUMP*" is about starting something new, so I hope to do something that will surprise you all again by adapting a new work for kabuki. I look forward to working with you in the future, Mr. Minosuke.

UMETADA:

I think this is the result of cross-cultural exchange, and through the performance of "*One Piece*" and "*NARUTO*", the characteristics of kabuki itself and even the structure of manga came to light. And through the talks of Minosuke-san and Nakano-san, I was

able to learn and think about it in concrete terms. Thank you very much for this valuable talk.

■ Guest Profile

□ Bando Minosuke

Born in 1989, he is the eldest son of Bando Mitsugoro X. His household monogram is Yamatoya.

In September 1991, he made his debut as Karako in the Kabuki-za Theater play *"Kairaishi"*.

In November 1995, he made his stage debut as Bando Minosuke II at the Kabuki-za Theater in Shigezo in *"Ranpei Monogurui"* and Kosaru in *"Kotobuki Utubozaru"*.

In April 2015, he became the head of the Bando School of Nihon Buyo (Japanese classical dance) and has performed many dances related to the Bando School.

In October of the same year, he played the three roles of Roronoa Zoro, Bon Clay, and Squard in the Shinbashi Enbujo Theater Super Kabuki II *"One Piece"*, and in August 2018, he played the main role of Uzumaki Naruto in the Shinbashi Enbujo New Kabuki *"NARUTO"*, which was the driving force behind its success.

□ Nakano Hiroyuki

Born in Fukui Prefecture in 1977.

Graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Waseda University.

Joined Shueisha Inc. in 2000. Worked in the editorial department of *"Weekly Shonen JUMP"*.

He was assigned to the editorial department of *"Weekly Shonen JUMP"*.

After working as the deputy editor of *"Saikyou JUMP"*, he became the editor-in-chief of *"Weekly Shonen JUMP"* in July 2017. Major manga works include *"Bleach"*, *"Majin Tantei Nogami Neuro"*, *"Toriko"*, *"Beelzebub"*, *"Ichigo 100%"*, and *"Naruto"* (media).